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WASHINGTON POST

Approved For Release 2005/11/21 : CIA-RDP75B00380R000400040033-2

17 MAR 1973

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Hanoi's Buildup Followed One by U.S.

By Jack Anderson

The Communist military buildup that has raised President Nixon's hackles, apparently, was precipitated by a U.S. buildup last November and December. It simply took the Communists longer to move their hardware down the infiltration routes into South Vietnam.

The U.S. delivered hundreds of aircraft and dumped tons of supplies upon Saigon before Christmas. The Central Intelligence Agency has reported that the Communists view this as a violation of the spirit of the peace negotiations and immediately began shipping equipment to their own forces in the south.

More than 300 tanks and armored cars, 150 heavy artillery pieces, 150 anti-aircraft guns and loads of lighter equipment have now reached South Vietnam, according to CIA estimates.

This is far less than the U.S. suddenly shoved upon Saigon after the Joint Chiefs warned late last October that President Thieu's regime would fall without more military equipment. Saigon wound up with more planes and helicopters, for example, than there were pilots to fly them. Many of the

planes haven't been moved out of the hangars since they were delivered.

As we reported in early January, this massive turnover of supplies to the South Vietnamese caused Hanoi to withdraw the truce concessions that had been made in October. President Nixon then sent a message to North Vietnam's Premier Pham Van Dong, offering him a choice between bargaining or bombing. The ultimatum gave Hanoi 72 hours to renew serious bargaining.

A cease-fire was finally signed after devastating raids upon the Hanoi environs. Under its terms, neither side was supposed to send more troops or equipment to South Vietnam after Jan. 28, except for replacements on a piece-by-piece basis.

The equipment that Hanoi sent to the south to match the U.S. buildup, according to intelligence reports, was shipped before but arrived after the deadline. A reported 70,000 men have also infiltrated into the south since the deadline.

High Noon

With airports having the hijack jitters, Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) invariably causes a stir when he shows up to catch a plane. He has the peculiar habit of toting rifles with him

back and forth from Michigan.

The congressman is an avid gun collector who, like the hero of the TV western "Have Gun, Will Travel," likes to carry his favorite firearms on his travels between his homes in Dearborn and Washington. This is bound to raise eyebrows at the airport security barriers.

With his congressional credentials, he is usually able to persuade the security guards that he isn't a hijacker, and his guns are stowed in the airplane's cockpit for safekeeping during the flight.

But he was running late the other day for a flight out of Washington's National Airport. He waited impatiently in the security line holding two huge hunting rifles. When someone asked whether he intended to shoot anyone, the affable Dingell quipped: "No, but if that inspector doesn't hurry, I'm going to bend this gun barrel over his head."

The security inspector didn't appreciate the congressman's sense of humor. He refused to inspect the guns and called over a Customs agent to complain that he'd been threatened.

"Look," pleaded Dingell. "I'm a congressman. I'm not threatening anybody. I've got

a speech, a flag presentation and two appointments tonight. I've got to make that plane."

The security official shrugged. Tempers flared. Faces reddened. Profanities were exchanged. Dingell told us afterwards: "I became absolutely outraged at this man's courtesy."

Northwest Airline officials finally intervened and Dingell caught his plane—but not before he pledged to introduce a bill setting down rules for "the courteous and efficient treatment of airline passengers."

Nixon's Name

During last year's campaign, Republican officials tried to avoid mentioning President Nixon by name. The idea was to emphasize the office rather than the personality. So they simply said "the President" when referring to their candidate.

Now, however, the rules have changed for good Republicans. This is evident from a memo issued inside the Civil Aeronautics Board.

The memo, circulated by the Office of Information, notes that "White House spokesmen are now referring to President Nixon, rather than the President . . . Accordingly, I recommend that you favorably consider doing the same."

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